

Self-Portrait of Nixon in the Campaign and Other

Six Crises, by Richard M. Nixon. New York: Doubleday & Co. 460 pp. \$5.95.

By William H. Stringer

Richard M. Nixon, the dedicated, unrelaxed candidate who came within a "gnat's-bye" of winning the presidency, has written a self-revealing account of his energetic career to date.

The big 460-page volume, quickly gaining wide press comment, will help to persuade Californians, and United States opinion generally, that Mr. Nixon is a figure of national and international experience, and not solely a defeated Vice President and budding west coast gubernatorial aspirant. Indeed this was undoubtedly

one purpose in penning these "memoirs."

Some of the Nixon experiences, headlined in the press, are fairly familiar. The fund crises and the Caracas mob scenes were excellently covered by Earl Mazo in his definitive biography. But the former Vice-President's personal account adds insight into Nixon the man—an individual possessed with very straightforward ideas about right and wrong, few doubts about anti-Communist policy, a family man with a courageous wife and two very normal daughters, an Eisenhower-type Republican.

This book simplifies the Alger Hiss case without, it appears, oversimplifying. It makes clear the dogged resolve of a fledgling vice-presidential

candidate to clear his name of the "California fund" charge even while highly placed Republicans were telling him to get off the Eisenhower ticket. It pinpoints the clear determination of Mr. Nixon to avoid the appearance of seizing power during President Eisenhower's illness; his problem was "to provide leadership without appearing to lead."

We learn something about two consummate politicians in the Khrushchev "kitchen cabinet" debate chapter when Mr. Nixon comments:

"To some, it may have looked as though we had both lost our tempers. But exactly the opposite was true. I had

full and complete control of my temper and was aware of it. . . . Khrushchev never loses his temper—he uses it." The appendix incidentally usefully reprints Mr. Nixon's radio-TV address to the Soviet people during his Moscow visit—a speech which remains to this day one of the few verbal penetrations of the closed Soviet society by a top Washington official.

But the most revealing section concerns the 1960 campaign. Here is Mr. Nixon's stout denial that he conducted any sort of "nife-too" campaign. To win, he had to hold the GOP vote while persuading five to six million Democrats to "leave their own candidate." He maintains that on campaign issues "I drew the line between as coldly and clearly and could

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not have hit him (Mr. Kennedy) harder than I did, with any sense of responsibility."

Mr. Nixon admits the loss of that crucial first television debate, not on issues but on appearance (poor lighting, underweight condition). The rest of the campaign was an arduous struggle to regain the lost advantage.

Here also is the charge, now denied by the Central Intelligence Agency, that candidate Kennedy was briefed by the CIA on United States plans for using Cuban exiles to overthrow Premier Castro (and then jeopardized American security by advocating just such a project). One might argue almost as validly that Mr. Kennedy was helpfully mobilizing public opinion to accept the strategy.

Mr. Nixon fixes strong responsibility on Robert F. Kennedy and some labor leaders for keeping the religious issue on the front burner throughout the campaign while seeming to deplore bigotry. He also makes a charge that some few newsmen let their personal preferences for Mr. Kennedy bias their campaign coverage, thus muffling Mr. Nixon's public impact.

Of special interest to Republicans will be his reasoning for not pressing harder with the election fraud charges. He discovered the shameful fact that it would take 18 months to get a recount in Cook County, Chicago, and that there was no way to force a recount in Texas. He decided to press no further, because otherwise "the orderly transfer of power might have been delayed for months." A more embittered individual could have created months of chaos in Washington.

Here is a self-portrait of a patriotic, closely reasoning individual, anxious to establish a favorable image of himself, in crises pushing himself almost beyond endurance. One could still wish for more wide-horizoned sentiments of the caliber of Mr. Nixon's superb "acceptance speech" at Chicago.